



“Why Did Jesus Come?”

Luke 12:41 - 48

June 2, 2019

We are going to be in Luke Chapter 12. Please join me there. This morning we continue in our study of the Gospel of Luke. As we do, we inch toward the conclusion of Luke Chapter 12. Perhaps, we breathe a sigh of relief as we do so because Luke Chapter 12 is extraordinary in its accumulation of the so-called hard sayings of Jesus.

This chapter is filled with challenging statements that have come to us from the Messiah. If we are going to know Him and if we are going to honor and worship Him, these are statements that we really must take to heart and take in.

However, before we breathe that sigh of relief, I have got to let you know that as we come up against the conclusion of Luke Chapter 12, we may have some of the hardest sayings yet, some statements from the Lord that are strong, even forceful, that we, His people, need to receive and take to heart because they are from His heart to ours.

We remember that Jesus was marching with His disciples closer and closer to Jerusalem. He was just months away from the cross. Here in this portion of Scripture, we see Jesus speaking to us once again about His purpose of coming into the world.

Let's see what is before us as we read Luke Chapter 12 and Verses 49 through 57. This is Jesus speaking:

**<sup>49</sup>“I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! <sup>50</sup>I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!**

**<sup>51</sup>Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. <sup>52</sup>For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup>They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”**

**<sup>54</sup>He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens. <sup>55</sup>And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens. <sup>56</sup>You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?**

**<sup>57</sup>”And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?**

Here we have the Messiah's teaching about the reasons for His coming into the world. Brothers and sisters, if somebody approached you in the workplace or in the neighborhood, knowing you to be a believer and they ask you to please explain to them why Jesus come into the world, I wonder how many would respond, *He came to cast fire?* Or, *He came to divide households, perhaps even yours.*

Yet, this is what is plainly coming forth to us from the heart of Jesus Christ. It is coming to us with strength. We can even see the intensity of this portion of Scripture when we look at the punctuation marks that are used. Jesus used exclamation points here.

Look at the end of Verse 49, exclamation point. At the end of Verse 50, exclamation point. At the beginning of Verse 56, exclamation point. In addition to that, there are several question marks used. These question marks come after sentences that are more assertions than digging for actual information.

Have you ever asked somebody a question when you were making a statement, not necessarily looking for information? That is what Jesus did here. He asked questions, but when you look at it you will see that assertions were at the heart of it.

What we see here is that there was some passion and some intensity that is coming from our Lord to us. My job is not to alleviate the strength of this text, but if I do my job correctly, it is to magnify exactly what Jesus was saying. So, I hope that I have your prayers as we dig into this. I pray that we will all look and understand and believe what Jesus was saying to us for our good, and for His glory that He be made known in truth.

This morning we are going to see three reasons for the coming of the Lord from the mouth of Jesus Himself. What we see here is that Jesus came to cast fire, and Jesus came to be baptized, and Jesus came to bring division. Let's receive this from the heart of our Lord to us.

First,

### **1. He came to cast fire (Luke 12:49)**

All this came just after Jesus gave the *Parable of the Returning Master*, after He had pictured for us the great reward that He will bring to His faithful servants, those serving in the power of the Holy Spirit. After He had pictured for us the great condemnation that is going to come upon the wicked and abusive servant, even people that were found in the very household of the master that were shown to be unregenerate by their behavior. There is judgment coming upon them. Discipline is even coming upon complacent servants of the Lord.

After the picture of all the things in the parable that we studied the past couple of weeks, now Jesus said this in Verse 49 about the purpose of His coming. Verse 49.

**<sup>49</sup>"I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!"**

Not only did Jesus tell us that He came to cast fire, but He also gave us His internal, visceral response to what He came to do. When He made that statement, He did not hem or haw, saying He really hated to say it, feeling mixed up about what was coming.

Instead, there was no sense of hesitation or reluctance. He said,

**<sup>49</sup>”I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!**

This came to us from Jesus. What does this mean? What was He talking about when He said that He had come to bring fire to this earth?

In my own contemplation of this verse and in what I have read among evangelical Bible teachers, there are two possible interpretations of this verse. Maybe Jesus had both of them in view. Throughout the pages of Scripture and even in the writings of Dr. Luke, we see this imagery of fire that is used with different aspects of God’s work in the world.

Some people read this verse and they see a picture of how Jesus is going to pour out His Spirit upon His people and it is going to come with power and energy from on high that is like fire. Jesus is going to set His people aflame with the Holy Spirit, and He could not wait to do so.

This comes after the *Parable of the Returning Master* where the master was so pleased with the servants that were serving him well. He was like, *I am going to light up my people with my power*. We read in the writings of Luke again in the book of Acts how fifty days after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, there were 120 disciples of Christ gathered in Jerusalem in the upper room.

They were praying and waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit. It began with what they heard. It sounded like a rushing of wind. It was very, very powerful. Then they also saw a manifestation of fire in their midst. According to what is written, that fire separated into 120 portions, and it came to rest upon each one of them.

This was a picture of the presence and the indwelling of the Spirit, who came to ignite His people with the ability to serve His Kingdom. So we have this language of Christians being on fire for the Lord.

This week I have been listening to the autobiography of a theologian/hip-hop artist by the name of LeCrae. He was talking about his conversion and how his mom asked him what was going on with him. LeCrae responded by telling her that he was getting on fire for the Lord. Jesus wants His people to be on fire! There are some who read this and say that it is a picture of the power of the Holy Spirit who has come to cast fire on the earth, and Jesus could not wait until it was ignited.

At the same time, we also need to look into Scripture and recognize the fact that from the Old Testament into the New Testament to the very end book of Revelation, we see that fire is used to picture God’s judgment and wrath upon unrepentant sinners. This is plainly given to us in the pages of Scripture.

Not only does Jesus want to light up His people with power, but the time is going to come when the flame of hell is going to consume those who reject Christ, those who do not know Him and remain in their sin.

John the Baptist introducing the Messiah gave these words to describe what Jesus would do.  
Luke 3:17

**<sup>17</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.**

The day is coming at the end of the age when Christ the Messiah will separate the true from the false, the believer from the unbeliever—those who have humbled themselves in His sight, who He will gather into His safe keeping. The chaff, the unbeliever, will be separated and burned with unquenchable fire. This is a picture of hell, which is a literal place.

So we have these different images that are here coming to us from Christ after a parable that depicts both faithful servants and wickedness that needs to be judged. What we need to do is take this from the heart of the Messiah and have trembling contrition within us by His grace.

*We need to say to the, Lord that I want to be a person who is lit up with Your love and grace. I need to be a person who has recognized that I have sinned in the sight of the Holy God. I need to recognize that there is forgiveness in Christ, and not only in Christ I can be delivered from the wrath to come, but I can be ignited with power to serve His Holy Name.*

Jesus came to bring fire to the earth. He said it with His own mouth. Some people believe it is this way, some people believe it is the other way that He was talking about specifically in this passage, but the pages of Scripture show them both to be true. So, these are things that we need to take to heart if we are going to follow the Messiah and believe what He has said.

We see that Jesus came to cast fire. We continue, and we see another reason that Jesus came into the world as He explained it to us. Why did Jesus come?

## **2. Jesus came to get baptized (Luke 12:50)**

Some people might read that and say that they thought Jesus was already baptized, so why is He talking about His baptism as something that is coming in the future and something that had not happened already.

True, He was in fact already baptized in water by John the Baptist. However, there was another baptism yet to come. That word *baptize*, it means to immerse. It happens when something is totally submerged in some kind of water or dye or some kind of fluid.

Here Jesus used this language of being plunged into something, totally flooded with something when He spoke of what He was to experience when He went to the cross to pay for our sin. He was looking forward to that time of atoning grace when He would be nailed to that rugged cross with spikes that resemble railroad nails.

Jesus was looking forward to the cross and He knew that He would not simply be singed by the wrath of God, but that He would be totally submerged in it. That He would not just be touched and brushed with divine judgment, but instead He would be flooded in it.

He would be fully engulfed as He fully represented the sin of His people, as He was being judged as the one who committed all those sins so that we could be forgiven and set free.

Jesus said, *I came into this world and I have a baptism to be baptized with.* That is the Messiah looking forward to the cross. Once again, in this sentence just like in the previous one, not only did Jesus tell us what He came to do but He also told us about His internal reaction to it. Verse 50:

**<sup>50</sup>I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!**

The word *distress* gets our attention. The Greek word that is used here has the imagery of being hemmed in, of being pressed in, so that a certain burden is forceful and pressing. The pressure was mounting within the heart of the Messiah, causing great distress.

This was a pressure that would continue to be exerted all the way into the Garden of Gethsemane, where the pressure would be so great that we read that He was even sweating drops of blood as He looked at what was going to happen the next day. Jesus said this as He was looking forward to the cross and said that the pressure building up in Him was so great.

Brothers and sisters, we worship Jesus Christ. We praise His Holy Name for what He has done in our place. As we worship Jesus, we worship God incarnate. This is the Godman. What we need to remember is that He was God in human form. But we also need to remember that He was God in human form! And here we see the full humanity of Jesus as He was feeling the force of what was yet to come as He is our Sacrificial Lamb as He was about to be crucified.

Even as we are fighting that good fight with the issues of anxiety and worry, trusting in God to provide for our basic everyday needs, there will still be seasons of life that we enter into where it just feels like the trials are so great and complicated that it is just bearing down so heavily within us.

More than a few of you know that experience. When you go through such seasons of trial and it is heavy, you need to look at your Savior and know that you have a sympathetic and faithful High Priest who has experienced the pressures of this world with even greater intensity than any of us can even fathom. Jesus has sympathy and He has understanding. It is the desire of our Wonderful Savior to lift His people up and see them through the hardships that they face.

Jesus had a baptism to be baptized with. Why did Jesus come? Jesus said, *I came to cast fire.* Jesus said, *I have come to be baptized.* Praise God that because He was baptized in redeeming wrath, we can be baptized in water to glorify His Name, thanking Him for all He has done for us.

One more. Why did Jesus come?

### **3. Jesus came to bring division (Luke 12:51-53)**

We continue into Verses 51 through 53.

**<sup>51</sup>Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. <sup>52</sup>For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup>They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”**

Jesus was speaking about the great conflicts that will occur within households based upon some believing in His Holy Name, and other not believing.

Jesus asked a question in Verse 51:

**<sup>51</sup>Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth?**

Well, Lord, yes! Lord, I stood up here in this pulpit and preached a sermon on Christmas Eve that was called *Hail the Heav'n Born Prince of Peace!* I told everybody that this song is not only my favorite Christmas Carol, but perhaps my very favorite song of all time—*Hark the Herald Angels Sing* and *Hail the Heav'n Born Prince of Peace* is a line from that song!

We learned that all throughout the pages of Scripture there is peace that Jesus gives to His people. Does He not? First and foremost, peace with God! By taking our sins to the cross and nailing them there so that they are removed from us, we are now covered in His righteousness and we have peace with God. Where there was once enmity, there is now peace.

Jesus comes to bring that peace within. Scripture talks about it. Philippians Chapter 4 and Verses 4 through 7 talks about His perfect peace. It also talks about the peace we can even have with people that are around us. And Paul tells us in Romans 12, *as long as it depends on you, live at peace with everybody*. The implication is that it is not always going to depend on you.

The fact of the matter is that a call for decision so often brings division. When there is somebody who is a fervent follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the Spirit is true to His teaching and His Word, within a single home there will be such a contrast in worldview and worship that there will be a sword that comes.

That perfect all encompassing peace, it is going to come in the Kingdom of the Messiah, fully expressed. But right now, in this phase of life there is going to be conflict that we have with people close to us. This conflict is introduced by the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives. We need to accept that. We need to walk in God's power with that, even as we are those seeking to sow peace by sharing the Good News.

There will be some people that are so upset by what you believe about Jesus, about the way you worship Him, about what that means for what you believe in your worldview, about the nature of man not being essentially good, but fallen in sinful nature, about there being one way to Heaven—that is Jesus, about God's design for sexuality and gender, about God's design on how this life is to be lived. There will be division.

There was a quote that I read a couple of weeks back. When I read it, it kind of cracked me up. Then this week, it had an increased relevance for what we are reading here in this text. The quote was something like: *Those who cannot hear the music think the dancers mad.*

Sometimes I think one of the funniest things to do is to press mute when you are watching a video of people singing, dancing, and playing instruments. These people are doing their gyrations and it looks so silly.

For the follower of Jesus Christ, Jesus is the music of our lives. He is the rhythm that we dance to. He is the beat that we walk with, and there will be people who simply cannot hear Him. They think that we are awfully strange because of the commitment that we have.

That will even be brought into households where people are divided because one is saying that they are going to live a life that worships Jesus based on the grace He has given. The others will tell us that we are nuts. You mean: You are not going to do this with us anymore? You are not going to do that with us anymore? You're going to church every Sunday morning?

I have spoken to many of you who have experienced this. I have experienced this in my own family, that some people get all upset about people who come to follow Jesus Christ. Take it. Receive it. By God's grace, wear it as a badge of honor, because we have an awesome Messiah who underwent a baptism for us that we might live forever in His Kingdom.

Bringing the portion of Scripture that we have been in this morning to its conclusion, we see that Jesus finished with a call for us to be aware of how He is at work in the world. Verse 54:

**<sup>54</sup>He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. <sup>55</sup>And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. <sup>56</sup>You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?**

**<sup>57</sup>"And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?"**

I think that Jesus was speaking about people who could see that He was doing spectacular things in the world, but he Pharisees, the family members, and all those who wanted to remain in Judaism, they came against faith in Jesus. So, people were backing off from the evidences of the Kingdom coming in Christ that were undeniable.

People in that day, they were an agrarian society and they knew how to read the weather. It was very, very important to their livelihood. When they saw the clouds forming, they knew it was going to rain. That was a good thing because that rain led to fruitful crops.

However, on the side of things, when they would have these so-called sacorro winds blowing in, they knew that the dry heat, kind of like our Santa Ana winds, was going to make it hot and sweaty and it would be bad for the crops.

Jesus was telling these people about what they were seeing before their very eyes about the signs of the Kingdom in their midst. The sick were healed. The blind were seeing. The deaf were hearing. The truth was being preached with abnormal power and authority by the Messiah.

Still, there were people that were coming against Jesus, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, all the religious leaders in their power positions were upset by His truth. All these things were taking place and Jesus was telling them that they should see it and know what was happening before their very eyes.

Jesus asked in Verse 57:

**<sup>57</sup>...but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?**

*How do you not know how to interpret the things around you?* It is always very tempting for me to take that verse and think about End Times Prophecy—the different signs that will build up leading into His return to this earth.

But Jesus was talking to them about things that they were seeing in front of them in their villages and in their households. I think that Jesus wants people to be thinking about the movement of God even in their homes and the meaning of it.

I was reading this passage and thinking about the ripple effects of the coming of Christ to a certain household. I was thinking about what it was like in the Saltzmann family back in the early to mid80s when Mom was the first one to come to a living faith in Jesus Christ. Mom and dad came to faith later in life.

I was about nine or ten. I was not very old, but I was old enough to see the difference in Mom. Things were getting shook up and she was bringing the presence of the Lord into the Saltzmann house, and it could not be denied.

If Lance and I were seeing it, I'm thinking about what my dad was thinking. My mom, his wife, changed and there was no denying it. My dad told my mom to go and take the boys to church, but to not give the church any money! Now dad is a very generous man in the Kingdom of the Lord.

Things were different in my household. The Lord was now inhabiting the home through a child of God who was a temple of the Spirit. Dad had his choice of whether he was going to church or not, but Lance and I did not have the choice! We went to Sunday school and church.

The difference was in mom and we could see it. There may be some of you who have not come to a living faith in Jesus and you have people in your home that have. You need to look and see the wonder and the glory of a child of God in your very midst.

Here we are two-thousand-years later on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean and there are people worshiping Jesus of Nazareth with lives made new. You need to see the signs of the presence of the Lord for your good, even in your very household.



For those of us who are in Christ, we need to pray for power and strength and resolution from the Holy Spirit that wherever we go, we are bringing Jesus with us so that people can see those similar signs.

We can just be joyful, happy-hearted followers of Jesus who has brought us into His Everlasting Kingdom, walking with gravity, holiness, and walking with grace, representing Him so that people can know the presence of the Kingdom here in our spheres of influence lives.

May the Lord give us grace and power to live in a way that reveals Jesus to those who are around us. We will close in a word of prayer. Then we will go to the very Table of the Messiah that we might reflect upon his grace in saving sinners like us.

Let's pray.